

He Learned Obedience

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Hebrews 5:8 (ESV),

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.

This passage refers to Jesus as the Son of God, who learned obedience through what He suffered. First of all, This passage challenges us in two ways at first glance. The first way is that Jesus had to learn obedience. Why would Jesus, God manifested in the flesh need to learn obedience? Let me explain by pointing out Hebrews 4:15 (ESV),

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

The main point in this passage is that Jesus *'has been tempted as we are.'* The clarification for this temptation is that sin has been condemned in the flesh (Romans 8:3) and God sent His only Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh. So the idea of sin being condemned in the flesh points back to the fall. You see the flesh is sinful. So even Jesus death with sinful flesh and the weaknesses of it. And we know the *'spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'* (Matthew 26:41).

So Jesus, Beset with the weakness of the sinful flesh had to learn obedience. In other words, He needed to choose to live in the Spirit and not in the weakness of the flesh. Galatians 5:16 (ESV),

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

There is something even more interesting about the idea of learning obedience which is shown in the definitions of the words learned as well as obedience. In the original Greek, the word learned is ‘manthano,’ which means: someone who learns from experience. And the word obedience is a Greek word ‘hupakoe,’ which means: literally, submission to what is heard. So, in other words, Jesus learned to submit to what the Father spoke to Him in His experience.

All of this brings me to the second challenge. Hebrews 5:8 (ESV),

He learned obedience through what He suffered

The point in question is ‘*what He suffered.*’ Why did He learn obedience through suffering? And what was the exact suffering or sufferings He learned obedience from?

Now, what I am about to share is not every experience of suffering, nor is it an all-inclusive response, yet at the same time, it is going to shed a lot of light onto the subject. Look back to Galatians 5:16 (ESV)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

So, there is illustrated two ways to walk, in the flesh and in the Spirit. But now, look at the next verse, Galatians 5:17 (ESV),

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

I would think that this inner opposition would cause one type of suffering for sure. Again, however, this type of suffering is not all-inclusive, nor is it the only type of suffering, but I think you get the point.

Now, where exactly did Jesus learn this obedience through what He suffered? I find an instance to be noted as a possibility in Matthew 26:36-46, right before His betrayal when He prayed in the garden at Gethsemane. I believe this prayer He prayed is directly linked with our passage in Hebrews 5:8. I say this because of what is found prior to this in Hebrews 5:7 (ESV),

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

It was also in the Garden of Gethsemane that we see Jesus pray in Matthew 26:42 (ESV),

My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

We can all agree that Jesus was clearly suffering here. And again, in context, just a few verses before, we have Jesus saying, *“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

I am reminded of lyrics to a song that says, “You came from heaven to earth, to show the way.”

It is hard to do good when the flesh is so close and opposing your every good Spirit inclined intention. And I would presume we could label this as a type of inner suffering. And since Jesus gave us the best example of choosing the Father’s will over the will of the sinful flesh, even though it is painful and the suffering goes on at times, it can always be overcome. We too can learn obedience through what we suffer. In other words, by His grace and Spirit, we can learn by and through suffering to submit and obey the leading of God by His voice through the Holy Spirit.

It is truly amazing that through suffering God is speaking to us. When God speaks to us in these moments, He is equipping us by His grace to learn obedience. In other words, the flesh

is pulling us in one direction, while the voice of God through His Spirit in another. This opposition causes us to learn to rely on God and not ourselves.

Again, we look at the struggle Jesus went through when He prayed, “*My Father if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it.*” Oh, to know you were about to drink the cup of God’s wrath and taste death for everyone. Such suffering! Yet He chose to obey the Father’s will above what He was suffering.

Hebrews 12:4 (ESV), now points to us in a like manner when it says,

In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Which then goes on to speak about the discipline of the Lord being for our good, so that we can share His holiness.

Obedience to the voice of God can often times be learned from the struggle to take up our cross and simply follow Jesus and the will of the Father. The flesh will always oppose the works of the Spirit. Because we know this, we can understand the work it takes, spiritually speaking, to follow Jesus instead of the flesh. But hey, let's face it, to be carnally minded may at times feel easier, but rest assured it will only produce death (Romans 8:6). And to live in the Spirit is life and peace. We must, therefore, deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus and the example He has given us. We too can learn obedience and grow and mature into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).